

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Issues and Recommendations for the Committee on the Education of the Deaf and the Blind
(Excerpt from Sub-Committee report dated...) December 01, 2005

The Committee was asked to examine several issues related to education of deaf and/or blind students in Idaho. The following are the goals that the Committee addressed in its work:

- To review current Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind service delivery systems to assure statutory authority and mandate is being met but not exceeded.
- To review the role and responsibility of local school districts in the education of deaf or blind students and to examine ISDB's involvement in IEP and placement decisions.
- To review and make recommendations for improving the organizational structure for the ISDB residential program, the central campus day program, and regional outreach programs.
- To identify and review the issues associated with a state agency (ISDB) providing educational services to school district students both at the ISDB campus and at the local school district. Issues include the coordination of funding responsibilities of the local school district and ISDB. Also to be reviewed is the ultimate responsibility for the provision of services to students, ISDB or the local district.

The Committee reviewed the work of the Office of Performance Evaluation (OPE). OPE conducted a comprehensive review of the ISDB upon the direction of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee (JLOC). The OPE report included detailed information about the school's responsibilities, enrollment trends, funding and program costs, educational programs and assistive technology. The study included a review of current practices in other states, parent surveys to determine satisfaction with the ISDB program and recommendations for future directions.

In addition to reviewing the work and report from the OPE, the Committee heard testimony from experts in the fields of education, services for persons with particular disabilities, representatives of various stakeholder groups and the public. The Committee reviewed research regarding education for students who are deaf and for students who are blind. They also sought input from state agencies regarding current funding and potential changes in funding. The Committee carefully considered the reports, research and testimony it received and is prepared to make recommendations in the following areas.

Issues and Recommendations: (*The Committee Identified 10 Gaps in the current state-wide service delivery model & formulated the following general recommendations on how to resolve those gaps.*)

#1. Identified Gap: Deaf and Blind – Together or Separate

General Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the State separate educational programs for the deaf/hard of hearing students from educational programs for the blind/visually impaired students.

#2. Identified Gap: Regional versus Centralized

General Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the State provide regional programs located in metropolitan areas within host districts. These Committee Recommendations for Education of the Deaf and the Blind programs would be located in magnet schools and/or within public school buildings to provide access for students to academic classes at the school. The Committee recommends that the State provide some type of central administration. In addition, the Committee recommends the work group address the needs of students in remote districts that are not close to the regional programs.

#3. Identified Gap: Administrative Structure

General Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the ISDB administrative structure reflect the service delivery model proposed.

#4. Identified Gap: Funding

General Recommendation: The Committee recommends that sufficient funding be provided by the State, and that the funding follow the individual students in a manner determined by the work group, to provide the service delivery model suggested by the work group.

#5. Identified Gap: Technology

General Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the approved administrative structure provide a clearinghouse for information regarding assistive technology and that the administrative structure staff implement a parent/community education program to ensure parents/community members are aware of assistive technology and understand how to use such technology.

#6. Identified Gap: Certification and Pay

General Recommendation-A: The Committee recommends that the State Board look at the certification requirements for working with special populations, higher education institutes' ability to provide programs that meet these requirements, and alternate routes to certification in order to ensure that Idaho is producing highly qualified staff members to provide appropriate educational programs (i.e., auditory/oral, total communication and other methodologies) for these (deaf/hearing impaired and blind/visually impaired) populations.

General Recommendation-B: The Committee also recommends that the State Board examine the funding structure for specialists moving from private practice into education to determine if the salary structure creates barriers for professionals interested in moving into educational settings. The Committee recommends that the State work to remove barriers that limit the ability of professionals to move into this educational field.

General Recommendation-C: The Committee recommends that the work group develop a plan to ensure that staff members who work with deaf/hard of hearing Committee Recommendations for Education of the Deaf and the Blind and blind/visually impaired students receive compensation commensurate with public school professionals.

#7. Identified Gap: Curriculum

General Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the State utilize current research-based, best practices, curriculum, materials and delivery methods to students in a timely manner to ensure students meet State standards and show growth as measured by State assessments. These programs would be determined by the individual student's IEP team.

#8. Identified Gap: Outreach

General Recommendation: The Committee recommends legislative changes to clarify the outreach program mission provided by ISDB and other statutory changes as recommended by the work group.

Note: Recommendations for statutory changes to clarify current outreach program to be completed by January 2006.

#9 Identified Gap: Transportation

General Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the work group develop a transportation plan for the proposed delivery model and that funding support the proposed plan.

#10 Identified Gap: Screening for deaf and hard of hearing/blind and visually impaired.

General Recommendation: Committee recommends that, in cooperation with the Department of Health and Welfare, the work group propose legislation mandating hearing and vision disability screening of all infants born in Idaho (except where there is parental opt-out) and at critical, defined points during the child's life (i.e. kindergarten registration, enrollment in new school district).